

# BolivianExpress

Free Distribution / Issue 19 / 2012

Magazine



# MÚSICA





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La Paz – Bolivia,  
June - July 2012

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On a La Paz winter night there's nothing better than the warm strum of a guitar by the fireside, the stirring voices of comrades in song, or even some fast tunes to heat up the dance floor.

This month, the *Bolivian Express* explores the myriad musical influences felt within La Paz. We've got an interview with the outgoing musical director of the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Bolivia, David Handel, who discusses the future of classical music in our fair city. But the classical music establishment is just one part of a smorgasbord of musical samplings, where we explore traditional popular instruments like the charango, and fringe trends like protest music through the ages, and more recently the rebellion of rap and the spirit of Christian rock. With interviews of contemporary musicians Christian Paredes and Verónica Pérez – from Hate S.A. and Efecto Mandarina, respectively – reviews of recent shows across the city, insight to jazz bars and **peñas**, and not least a list of live music venues, in this issue we immerse you in a printed concert of sounds, beats and rhythms from La Paz.

By Matthew Grace

**N.B.** Several Spanish and Aymara words are marked in **bold** throughout this issue. Their meanings can be found in our glossary



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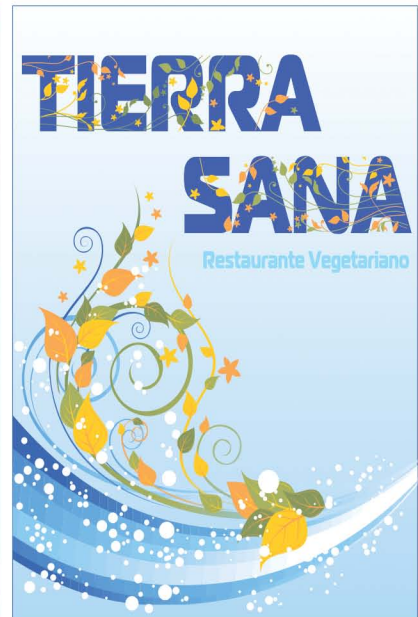
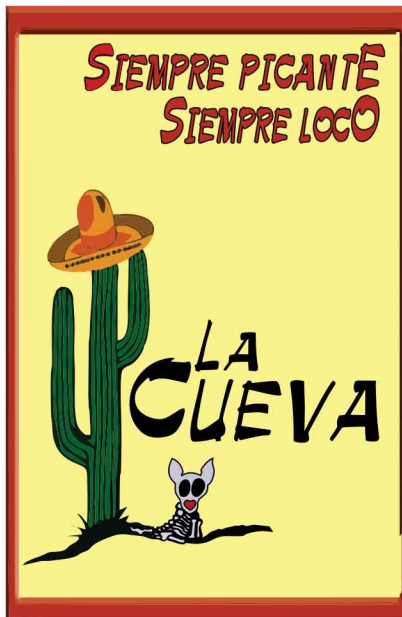


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ACÉMILAS HUMANOS

Human mules

ATAJO

Shortcut (also a band name)

BOLICHE

Slang term for entertainment venue

CHOFER

Driver

DEL CORAZÓN

From the heart

EL DESNIVEL

The difference/gap (also the name of a club in La Paz)

DIRECTOR TITULAR

Music director

HOJA VERDE

Green Leaf

KALAMPEO:

Quechua word for 'to tap your feet'

LOS MATADEROS

The stockyards

PEÑA

Folkloric dance and music show

PERSONAJES PACEÑOS

Characters of La Paz

PRESTE:

A type of party (for weddings and other celebrations) that typically last for up to three days.

VIVOS Y COLEANDO

Alive and kicking

GLOSSARY



# SOROJCHI PILLS

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From Bolivia, heart of dark-skinned America, we come: miners, Indian peasants, students, men, women and children. We form a circle of raised fists, we say to those who stomp on our flag and steal our resource, "Enough. It's time for rebellion!"

So spoke Nilo Soruco, a famous protest singer banned under the Bolivian leadership of the 1970s. Soruco wrote over 300 songs committed to the social and political struggles of South America, preaching justice and equality for his homeland.

The roots of modern Bolivian protest music can be traced back to the Spanish civil war (1936–1939). During this war music acted as a vessel, carrying the hopes of those fighting against Franco's fascist army. These songs of freedom were carried over to Latin America on the backs of Spanish immigrants. South American protest music evolved from this moment, first gradually, then overwhelming in 1959, galvanised by the Cuban revolution. Cuban musical trends like the Nueva Trova, which harmonised revolutionary lyrics with traditional Cuban rhythms, nurtured the roots of

a musical resistance across the continent, urging the working class to stand up and change their situation. Its lyrics spoke a socialist message of empowerment to the poor and oppressed.

The movement gathered a great Bolivian following amongst a number of musicians and activists of the time. In Nueva Trova style, traditional harmonies were combined with messages of social change by the likes of Benjo Cruz, an Argentinian-born Bolivian during the late 1960s, who became known as one of Bolivia's most famous and influential folk singers. His politically charged songs mirrored the feelings of people under the military government, stirring civil unrest within the country. In 1970 Cruz exchanged his folk guitar for a gun and joined a group of guerrilla fighters. He died of exposure before ever being involved in any real combat situations, becoming a martyr for his cause like many fallen activists before him. But one cannot underestimate the impact his powerful voice and haunting lyrics had on the South American freedom movement.

Cruz's lyrics went on to inspire during

the turbulent, dark times of the 1970s and 80s. In 1971 Colonel Hugo Banzer Suarez seized control of Bolivia after staging a violent military coup. Banzer's reign as dictator proved to be a gruesome and bloody time in Bolivian history, during which thousands fled to seek asylum in other countries. In 1974 a price increase in basic goods led to a peasant uprising, where locals formed roadblocks in Cochabamba singing songs of resistance and calling for a change. They were then brutally slaughtered by the military.

The chaos of the 1970s and 80s did however give rise to new generation of singers willing to give their voices to another cause: a new generation that replaced rhythmic strumming of the folk guitar with the speed and fury of hip-hop. This unique blend of Andean folk styles, traditional harmonies, blinding intensity and lyrics that speak to the youth is known as *wayna rap*. It is music created to speak to young people, show them the injustices of the world they live in and inspire them to try and change that world. New sounds, new tempos, yet they speak with the same message: let us stand up for injustice and sing songs of freedom.



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# THE MAESTRO DEPARTS

David Handel's much-lauded tenure as the head of the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Bolivia has come to an end. Helena Cavell has a conversation with him about his time here and the precarious state of the orchestra without him.

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TEXT: HELENA CAVELL  
PHOTO: METRO MAGAZINE

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**D**avid Handel has led the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Bolivia (OSN) for the past fourteen years. Once maligned as unprofessional by its audience and collaborators, under Handel's stewardship the orchestra has gained respect as a talented and organised company of musicians. But his recent departure earlier this year – he's now lending his baton as the guest conductor of the Moscow City Symphony, among other companies – has left the orchestra in a state of uncertainty and concern for its future; unaware of how to proceed following its loss, the OSN finds itself in a state of limbo.

Handel, however, retains a positive outlook for the company's future. He hopes the work he did with it over the last fourteen years has provided the OSN with the ability to continue in the same successful vein. 'My sincerest hope is that the values and procedures that we installed during my tenure [will] be dutifully respected by everyone. We created a level of expectation, and it is now in the hands of others to maintain or surpass that level of expectation. My tenure with the OSN de Bolivia was fourteen years, a long tenure by any standard. Therefore, my departure is probably something akin to a young man/woman's departure from his home to go off to university. It means for everyone a change of lifestyle, ambience, but one hopes that the values which have been instilled remain present in spirit and action'.

Under Handel's leadership, the OSN has made considerable progress. On arrival in La Paz, in 1998, he faced significant challenges, including a lack of private sector support, a lack of a permanent concert hall in which to perform, lax discipline and what he describes as 'unprofessional standards in terms of rehearsal and concert procedures and artistic expectations . . . it obviously meant lots of dedication and hard work'. Handel's strategy was

to encourage a sense of professionalism in the company, sowing in it a 'culture of excellence' and demanding the highest level of musicianship the members could provide. Now, nearly a decade and a half later, the OSN is a larger company, with more skilled musicians who now play in their own concert hall, the Centro Sinfónico Nacional.

Audience attendance, perhaps the most objective way of measuring success, also reflects a staggering improvement: '[It's increased] ten or eleven-fold, according to our most recent analysis', says Handel. 'Certainly the growth reflects the "improvements" . . . I think that the increased appreciation of "classical music" on the part of the public is in part a result of the seeds we sowed beginning in 1998, just as it is a factor of our having taken advantage of every media outlet to get the word out into the community, that we are relevant players in the community of artistic ideas, nationally and internationally'. The OSN has also reached out to communities that had not had access to, or held an interest in, classical music in the past, rather than adopting an audience that was already established.

Considering the role he played in the development of the OSN, Handel's departure has been a regrettable blow felt by all. Some question his farewell, unable to comprehend why he would leave after such success. However, his reasoning makes it clear he feels no regret over his decision: 'It was time . . . The relationship between an orchestra and conductor has – I believe – a life cycle, and fourteen years was a long one by any standard. I simply could not spend the necessary amount of time in La Paz that this orchestra and public needs and deserves'.

However, Handel is leaving behind some valuable advice: he believes the achievements made during his term need to be protected and built upon, and this can be achieved through an

international call for the next director in a fair and open process. But Handel also seems concerned that political or personal intervention might prevent this from happening; he alludes to the OSN's 'historically complex environment', implying that the selection process has not always been fair in the past. But he isn't concerned about likely comparisons that will undoubtedly be made with his replacement: 'Comparison is inevitable, but it also has very little importance. I reiterate that my hope is that the general values and management of professional procedures remain, but that whoever becomes the next **director titular** will leave his or her specific imprint. I hope that the new music director will be able to lead the OSN to an even higher level of achievement'.

Handel proved by his time here that classical music is indeed appreciated in Bolivia, something that was doubted before his arrival. 'Anecdotally, during at least the last five years of my tenure, whenever I would enter a taxi, the **chofer** usually knew who I was and knew something about the OSN'. If this is the case, it would seem that classical music does have a place in Bolivian culture. Yes, there is little investment, but money, while important, isn't the only requisite for success: 'Unfortunately, the training, funding and access for musicians (for economic reasons) is often lacking. The public is there and is eager for the experience. There exists in parts of Latin America a disconnect between what the population wants and what its governing authorities are willing to prioritise . . . [but] the future should prove positive'.

David Handel has equipped the OSN with a recipe to attain greatness. Financial difficulties aside, the company has the foundation it needs to continue this success. Now is the time for the OSN to prove it can continue without him. In fact, his absence could provide an excellent opportunity for the OSN to indulge in experimentation, to transform from a good company under a great director into a great orchestra in itself.



# VERO

## Interview with Efecto Mandariná's Verónica Pérez

**V**erónica, or Vero, Pérez is the singer of the electric-jazz group Efecto Mandariná (which also features Bladimir Morales on bass, Diego Ballón on piano and Eddy Chuquimia on drums). At 24 years old, she's known for her engaging and charismatic performances, captivating audiences with her deep, emotionally laden voice. Already featured on two Efecto Mandariná albums, she's planning to release a solo album in the near future.

**BX:** Who were your first influences/inspirations?

**V.P.:** My first influences were pop, because I grew up in a time when pop stars were everywhere, so I'd

have to say Christina Aguilera and Mariah Carey. But later on, my interest grew in other types of music such as rock – Latin American rock like Soda Stereo, Charly García and at the same time the Doors and King Crimson the Mars Volta, Jeff Buckley, Björk and Frank Zappa. I've always liked every kind of music, that's why I believe I have the ability to sing various different styles. The artists who influenced me the most are Amy Winehouse, Stevie Wonder, Dinah Washington, [Brazilian singer] Marisa Monte and Earth, Wind & Fire.

**BX:** How did Efecto Mandariná form?

**V.P.:** Efecto Mandariná started in around 2008; they wanted to create jazz music combined with other ingredients, as they were getting tired

of playing to the same standards as everyone else. So they thought that if they added an electronic sound, something interesting could emerge out of it. So they did. At the time, I was singing with a DJ producer called Marcelo Guerrero; we had our own material and played it in a few places. One time, Marcelo was approached by Efecto Mandariná to do a collaboration – that's when I met them... Time went by and I kept performing with the band, until we merged and have remained together ever since.

**BX:** Aside from Bolivia, has Efecto Mandariná performed anywhere else in or outside of Latin America?

**V.P.:** Not yet, but we have intentions of doing it, probably sometime next year – we're still in the process of planning. . . . At Festijazz, we met





# PÉREZ

**Text: Antoaneta Roussinova**  
**Photo: Alejandro Loayza Grisi for METRO Magazine**

some great international artists, with whom we shared a stage and have kept in touch with since. People have expressed a real interest in our culture and music.

**BX:** In your opinion, how big is the jazz scene in Bolivia?

**V.P.:** It's actually very small. It is considered a kind of elite [group] of musicians who take themselves very seriously and choose not to promote their music – something which we really disagree with. We think jazz music, like any other music, could be commercial and could be heard by many. The problem, however, isn't only with the jazz scene but the whole music scene in Bolivia. Musicians are too cautious; we have too much insecurity, artists here go by the simple idea of making music for money and competing with others

for fame. We have to understand that music is sacred; it is an extremely sensitive and perfect way to express one's emotional and physical thoughts.

**BX:** Can you tell us about Efecto Mandarin's albums?

**V.P.:** We've recorded two live albums, as we believe our music has to be recorded live because of all the improvisation we do while we're playing it. The songs that we play never sound the same; they do have a structure to follow, but the tune always ends differently. The arrangements are done live and are always the most beautiful moments we capture in our music.

**BX:** What plans does Efecto Mandarin have for the future?

**V.P.:** Recording a new album, with

more of our own compositions – we've already started writing. We're also going to do some covers of our favourite songs. We plan to hopefully do a tour and travel, but also shoot a video that will transcend [beyond our audience].

**BX:** What are your future plans as a solo artist?

**V.P.:** I'm working on my album, which isn't as jazzy as you might expect, but I think it'll be more personal and intimate. I hope you all like it and feel connected to the songs at some point. I want it to be an album that doesn't necessarily use instruments as we widely know them . . . that will show how the world is made out of sound and music.

Look for Verónica Pérez's solo album in the near future.



# MUSIC, MONEY AND THE MESS

## Rocking Out for Chr

TEXT: NAOMI COHEN  
PHOTO: METRO MAGAZINE

**L**a Casa de la Casa, titan of the Bolivian rock industry, is not a corporate production house. The difference lies in the details: swap the glimmering skyscraper for a pasty one-storey 'T', the jet-setting executive for a jet-setting missionary, the love ballads to an ambiguous 'she' for love ballads to an ambiguous, asexual 'He'. (Keep the cross necklace, keep the shot glass, keep the Saturday open-air festivals.) With over 90 percent of Bolivians identifying as Christian, the biggest break for a band is likely to be a gig at the local church.

'God is cool', says J.P. Burillo, lead singer and guitarist of Zona Sur's main Evangelical church, Kairos. With almost half of its membership under 18, Kairos worship services encourage jumping, hand waving, lip-synching and occasionally choreographed steps, and when the pastor takes over, the electric strings take second-in-command.

The right music has the power to extract

tears out of a powerful sermon, says Alexander Iturralde, Bolivia's best bassist and member of its most popular Christian band, Tejjilah. Like two of the band's other three players, he was in a secular band before making the switch, but he says he was never comfortable with the previous crowd of rockers. 'That phase is already over', says Iturralde. 'It's gone. Now, I'm happy, and I thank God for it. Now, when I play, it's spiritually rich.'

Few things in Bolivia, though, are immune from politics. The father of Mauricio Salcedo, Tejjilah's drummer, is the pastor of Ekklesia/La Casa de la Casa, and Martín Joffré, Tejjilah's lead singer and one of the country's only living rock legends, converted a year after his previous group Loukass split up.

'It's like, I had these plans of being a rock star, but now I'm Christian, so I'll be a worship star', says Burillo, who finds that rockers following the Christian tidal wave 'Christianise [their] ego.' He says that becoming a Christian musician, just like becoming a pastor, is a more accepted path now than when he was growing up. The Christian market is the most

solid of Bolivia, with Protestants growing in number every year from missionaries and urbanization.

The audience size is amplified by the stagnant non-Christian market. Equinoccio, La Paz's biggest rock venue, has the same limited crowd of frequenters every week and can't avoid featuring Christian artists, despite their incongruity with the scene. 'Bolivians aren't used to listening, just as they're not used to reading or to viewing an exhibition', says Equinoccio's manager Boris Aranibar. Church sponsorship, then, is strategic. 'Music is an instrument. There's something about rock that's empowering; it allows you to reach many more people. To use rock as a way of getting young people to come to the Christian movement is effective.'

In the biblical book of Chronicles, the tabernacle of David sponsors 24,000 musicians to play 24 hours of worship music every day. The instruments were the loudest of their times – some say the ancient-day equivalent of rock instruments – and the project allowed David to strengthen and extend his empire.



# Y LAH: rist



Music also appears before man in the book of Ezekiel, where the devil leads worship with God's instruments. Some embrace rock's place in the church, but others, put off by the rocker lifestyle – Kurt Cobain famously said, 'Get stoned and worship Satan!' – see proof

in this passage that rock is the 'devil's music' and refuse their performances in church. Burillo specifies that the analogy applies to musicians who strive for idol status, aided by 'whoever has the money to deploy or extend his kingdom'.



He says that he used to compose to please the congregation, but as he was walking home one day, God came to him in a revelation and asked why he had never asked Him for his opinion. Since then, Burillo, who is Kairos's youth pastor and is reinitiating its rock music school, says he plays for God only and aims to replicate his revelation through music. 'I hate when worshippers are treated as artists', says Burillo.

Conversely, other Christian rockers (Iturralde, for example) consider themselves artists rather than worshippers. But artists and worshippers alike can be met with suspicion by secular listeners, some of whom feel that the rock and roll image is compromised or even rendered obsolete by the Christian spirit. 'Rock and roll is of the street; it's a way of life', says Boris Aranibar. '[Rock] is liberty, it's political criticism, it doesn't defend any position. [But] I think Christian rock explicitly defends a position.' So, Christian rock is simply not on Aranibar's playlist.

While less secular listeners may not hurt the industry, Iturralde says he finds the separate label discriminatory. He acknowledges that Christian rockers assume a distinct role and enjoy a special connection with their audience, but he insists that his competition exists beyond religious lines. Tejjilah's lyrics, like those of most high-profile Christian artists, focus more on the message than on God, and the band's producer has worked with Prince, Collective Soul and Deftones. Even Burillo's band has stepped outside of its bounds, experimenting with the zampoña, the quena and the charango, all folkloric instruments.

Christian rock is testing boundaries both in the music world and the religious world. When Burillo was playing during a mission trip in the Middle East, he says crowds would gather in awe. He had such an impact that there were moments when policemen threatened to confiscate his guitar. Burillo was drawn away from 'boring' Catholic services to the Evangelical church by a 'lady that sang like an angel', which led him to where he is today. Now, Ekklesia's broadcast company, which has a virtual monopoly over Bolivia's Christian stations, is the siren that captures more secular listeners every year.

'I don't know if many people knew Margaret Thatcher', says Burillo, 'but the whole world knew who Michael Jackson was. Music has the ability to transcend culture, to transcend languages.' Burillo explains that Mick Jagger still plays at 68 because music – or worship, as he calls it – is forever. Today, the church's medium is rock, the sound of the youth. In coming generations, though, Burillo knows the sound will evolve. He says he hopes he will accept the new genres, but he knows that until his eyes close, he will keep strumming his guitar for God.



# DRUMMING FOR HATE S.A.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTIAN PAREDES

Text: Naomi Cohen and Eleanor Warnick

Photo: METRO Magazine

**B**X: Who was the first musician that inspired you?

**C.P.:** The first musician that inspired me was Igor Cavallera. He's a heavy metal drummer. I liked his energy, what he expressed – it was more original, something you can't explain, that was larger than life.

**BX:** What qualities do you find are most important in a drummer?

**C.P.:** To me, solidity is important. A drummer has to be the heart of a band. It's the rhythm that liberates. Some say the drummer is secondary. But I don't agree. I think the drummer is on the front line; he's the one that brings the rhythm. He's the most important. And he has to create. He has to reach the people, beyond technique.

**C.P.:** Yeah, I have some Pumas – some shoes I bought in 2005, which I always wear even though they are a bit scruffy. But I don't drink backstage or anything like that.

**BX:** How does it feel to represent Bolivia for such a well-known brand?

**C.P.:** I'm the first Bolivian drummer to represent a brand like Mapex and the truth is that I don't really know how to handle it. It's cool. But sometimes it's a lot of pressure. It is a competitive industry and I'm honoured to represent my country. Things like this show Bolivia is taking its art and culture more seriously.

**BX:** Are there any movements to promote Bolivian music?

**C.P.:** Bolivia has quite a diverse music scene. There are all sorts of bands, from

level. So you have to be responsible and always give your best. And only you can do this. Someone can tell you, 'No, you just have to play well' – but it has to come from you.

**BX:** You were talking about your teacher?

**C.P.:** My teacher was Geri Bretel. He plays cumbia. Cumbia is very popular, tropical music. They play it a lot here in **preste** parties. He plays cumbia, I play metal, but he's the best drummer I know here – he's excellent, excellent, and he was my professor.

**BX:** And do you want to be a teacher yourself?

**C.P.:** I love teaching. I love it when people don't understand something, and ask, because it helps me to be-



**BX:** Were you always a drummer?

**C.P.:** No, I've played a couple of other instruments... guitar, piano... But I don't see myself as much of a guitarist or pianist. The drummer persona suits me well.

**BX:** Were the other members of your family musical?

**C.P.:** No, and they never supported my career as a musician. My father thought it was just a phase and saw me as a bit of a rebel. Fifteen years after I started playing, my dad finally came to my concert and now he accepts what I do.

**BX:** Where is your favourite place to play?

**C.P.:** The Open Air Theatre in La Paz, 'Jaime Laredo'. I played there once in front of a crowd of 4,000. I was really nervous beforehand but as soon as I started playing, I began to enjoy it.

**BX:** Do you have any pre-performance rituals?

metal, folk, cumbia and rock-pop to electronic music with loads of covers. But most Bolivian bands are pretty anonymous outside Bolivia.

**BX:** Why did you choose an English Band name (Hate)?

**C.P.:** We get asked that question a lot. We chose that name in '94 because metal comes from England so it makes sense to have an English name. I didn't help choose the name because I joined the band later. But we sing in Spanish not English. We added the letters SA to be distinctive - Hate SA (which stands for *Sudamérica*), so that we stand out from other international bands.

**BX:** Do you think you have a responsibility as a national symbol?

**C.P.:** Yes, I think so, but it depends on the artist. For instance, there's a drummer that's very famous, but he isn't responsible, on a personal or a public

come a better musician – study more, research something on the Internet, learn new techniques. So I prefer it when someone doesn't understand something – it's better for me because it allows me to grow.

**BX:** How much do you practise?

**C.P.:** I don't practise alone much. But I practise all day with my band, so I'm always playing – about five hours a day.

**BX:** Any final words?

**C.P.:** Discipline is most important for a musician. But you don't just have to practise, practise, practise. You have to be active. That's my advice: be disciplined, and if you want to be a musician, you really have to want it from the bottom of your heart. To me, it doesn't matter whether you have practised for many years. You have to want it from your heart.



# MUSIC MONEY CAN'T BUY

TEXT : ELEANOR WARNICK

**F**or many well-known Western musicians, success means profit and fame. A stereotypical Western pop star has a handful of number-one hits, with merchandise mounted on the walls of hormonal adolescents.

But for Leonardo Egúsqiza (a regular hit at Sol y Luna as part of the Negringo duo), commercial Yani, or American, music, says more about glamour than genuine musical talent. Moreover, he asks, why should music be defined by its commercial value? For Leonardo, a self-taught guitar maestro who could not afford the conservatoire admission fee, music should be *del corazón*.

Likewise, the charango movement in Bolivia defies the economical exploitation of music. Talented musicians such as Mauro Nuñez, who composed and performed new pieces all around Bolivia from 1944, and Ernesto Cavour, who founded el Primer Museo del Charango in 1962, have helped re-popularize the small instrument. Its accessibility means it can belong to everyone.

Folk music is an intrinsic part of campesino culture. Music, not money, enriches the campesino children's inheritance. Learning to sing is as natural as learning to talk and many indigenous rhythms are often inspired by nature. For example, common campesino beats include *burrokhatinas* (rhythm of donkeys), *vallimayu* (rhythm of the valley of river) and *torokhatinas* (rhythm of herding bulls).

Furthermore, music is often played to celebrate nature, such as in the annual harvest celebration. The charango teachers at el Museo de Instrumentos Musicales de Bolivia claim that growing up in the countryside fosters a musical ear because children are not bombarded by urban noise pol-

lution, such as horns, the screeching of cars and blaring pop music. Bands such as Axis of Awesome parody the repetitiveness of this music by showing that the majority of hit singles are based on the same four chords. Conversely, charango players are not limited by their 'best-selling' formulas. Indigenous folk musicians don't tune their instruments according to a particular scale. They simply tune by ear.

However, pastoral quaintness is only one side of a darker history to charango music. When the campesinos were employed in the mines, they brought the charango with them. The charango became an instrument of the oppressed, which spoke where words could not. Sometimes, charango music was a cry of anguish, played at funerals. But mostly, it was a form of escapism. Along with aguardiente and coca leaves, music provided release from a long, hard day at the mines, where shifts could be up to twelve hours-long (during which time the miners could not see daylight) for up to four months at a time. Charango songs were upbeat and lively. For instance, *kalampeo* (a Quechua word which means 'to tap your feet') originated in the mines.

The relationship between music and miners lived on long after nationalisation of the mines in 1952, when forced labour was abolished, compensation promised and the three principle mines expropriated. Although mining conditions have improved since the 15th century, when African slaves were forced to work as *acémilas humanas* (human mules), the life expectancy of a miner is still only forty years old. Given such tough working conditions, it is unsurprising that miners' song lyrics 'often evoke an idealistic future.

'Aguas Claras', by Kalamarca, is a song known to every Bolivian schoolchild.

*Aguas claras serán los niños  
yo seré padre dichoso  
aguas claras serán los niños  
tu serás madre dichosa  
el amor que te ofrezco  
es illimani que nos protege  
en el cielo las estrellas  
y en la tierra estarán nuestros niños*

*The children will be bright as water  
I will be a lucky father  
The children will be bright as water  
You will be a lucky mother  
I'll give you as much love  
As the Illimani mountain who protects us  
Stars in the sky  
And our children will be on earth.*

Throughout Bolivian history, the charango has provided solace to the miners, soldiers and prisoners alike. Bolivian prisoners of war could exchange their poncho for the right to strum away their sorrow at the feet of their jailers. Uncaptured soldiers used it to raise morale and members of the Bolivian army would prepare for battle by slinging a gun over one shoulder and a charango over the other.

But while oppression in the mines and bitter wars have faded into Bolivian history, charango playing remains alive in annual festivals and competitions such as the Congress of Charango in Sucre (which happens in May) and the November festival of Alquile, where prizes are given to both craftsmen and players. Young stars like Isabel Flor, the 12-year-old winner of the Charango de Oro Festival in Aquile, are preserving its magic for posterity. 'If great people can do great things, so can we', she smiles. Despite her talent, Isabel's potential income as a musician is by no means guaranteed. Leonardo claims that by playing traditional music, he earns just enough to get by, whereas many other folk musicians don't ask for money at all. After all, music is measured in beats, not bolivianos.



# MUSICAL ROUNDUP

TEXT AND PHOTOS: MATTHEW GRACE

**L**a Paz is host to a musical confluence of rhythms spanning the breadth of the country as well as international genres which range from jazz to classical music. While by no means comprehensive, below you'll find information on where to find live music and what the city has to offer. Pick a wintry night to visit a local **boliche** and



PEÑA AT MARKA TAMBO

immerse yourself in the sounds.

A visit to Bolivia wouldn't be complete without sampling the **peña** scene. One of the best is at **Marka Tambo**, on Calle Jaén (No. 710), a quaint pedes-



JAM SESSION AT THELONIOUS JAZZ CLUB

trian walkway in the old colonial part of town. This peña features traditional Bolivian music with costumed danc-

ers from several different parts of the country. Arrive around 10 pm Thursday through Sunday. Dinner served.

Up Calle Jaén from Marka Tambo is the **Mestizo Cultural Café**, at the corner of Calle Sucre. In addition to very chill atmosphere, café food and a bar, local musicians play on its small stage. Contact the folks at Mestizo at [mestizocultural@hotmail.com](mailto:mestizocultural@hotmail.com) or at 76221110 for a schedule of music events.

Head the other way down Calle Jaén to Calle Indaburo (No. 654) and check out the downstairs bar **Boca y Sapo**. With regular music on Wednesdays and Saturdays, it's a great place



JAM SESSION AT THELONIOUS JAZZ CLUB

to hang with locals and have a beer (or something stronger).

The top jazz club in town is **Thelonious Jazz Bar** in Sopocachi, on Av. 20 de Octubre (No. 2172). It's an old-school jazz joint, with dark lighting and a good-sized stage that sees many out-of-town acts pass through. The bar regularly features local jazz, blues and rock bands, along with impromptu jam sessions.

Around the corner from Thelonious is the French brasserie **La Guinguette**, in



RHOÉS PIERE AT MESTIZO CULTURAL CAFÉ

the Alianza Francesa building on the corner of 20 de Octubre and Guachalla. Come for the food (and booze) and stay for the monthly flamenco music shows of Manfariel Gitano.

Those looking for polished shows and big names in the local scene should stay tuned with the calendar of the **Teatro Municipal Alberto Saavedra Pérez** on the corner of Indaburo and Sanjines. This majestic theatre is host to numerous national and international acts ranging from classical music to Andean folklore.

And don't forget Zona Sur, far to south of central La Paz. Among other clubs is **El Boulevard Club de Blues**, on Calle Ignacio Cordero (No. 8421) in the heart of Calacoto. It's a downscale joint in an upscale neighborhood, where any Chicago bluesman would feel at home.





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## Cultural Calendar

### Cultural Calendar July 2012

**26 June – 1 July, 8 pm**  
**DAVID SANTALLA, 50 AÑOS**

**Teatro Municipal 'Alberto Saavedra Perez', Calle Jenaro Sanjinés at the corner of Indaburo**

David Santalla returns to the stage to celebrate 50 years in theatre. For this occasion he has prepared some fragments from his most famous works, which when first performed made history on the Bolivian stage.

**21 June – 3 July, 10 am**

**CARLA MEALLA: VISUAL ARTS EXHIBITION**

**Arte 21 Centro Cultural, Calle Pankara 1002, between Calle 21 And Avenida Montenegro**

Self-taught artist Carla Mealla presents some highlights from her work.

**26 June – 15 July, 8:30 am**

**CONOCE TU CIUDAD TOUR – A FOUR-DAY PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN TO REDISCOVER LA PAZ**

This holiday programme immerses children in the history, culture and industry of La Paz. Activities include a visit to the Delizia ice cream factory, storytelling at the Museo de Etnografía and trips to a fire station, seat of government and various parks and historical monuments around La Paz.

Suitable for children from 5 to 12 years.

**For more information please call: 2433310 or 70177780**

**2 – 6 July, 7:30 pm**

**7 – 8 July, 8 am**

**GURDJIEFF: EL TRABAJO Y EL ARTE DE LA DANZA SAGRADA**

**Cinemateca Boliviana**

This course, with Uttam Módenes, is a practical exercise of Gurdjieff's philosophy, aimed at awakening the inner self. The body-mind-heart core is stimulated by the attention paid to it, and participants enter into a consideration of where they are (sensation), what what are (knowledge) and how they are (feeling).

**For more information**

**please call: (+591) 735 64 005 – 706 18 130**

**3 July**

**SEMINARIO INTERNACIONAL SOBRE LEGISLACION CINEMATOGRAFICA**

**MUSEF – Museo Nacional de**

**Etnografía y Folklore (www.musef.org.bo)**

A seminar to discuss the international legislation of cinema, with panelists from the Film and Audiovisual Authority of Latin America (CAACI).

To register, email:

**comunicacion@conacineboivia.com.bo.**

**7 July, 4 pm, 7:30 pm**

**SENDEROS DE PERDICIÓN II**

**Teatro Municipal Modesta Sanjinés**

Avenida Mariscal Santa Cruz at the corner of Potosí. Accompanied by a series of images by Beimar Castillo, this play depicts the problematic social realities in the city of El Alto.

**13, 14 July, 6 pm**

**5 FESTIVAL COROICO INTERNACIONAL 2012**

Declared part of the cultural heritage of the municipality of Coroico, this festival is the most important music event in Bolivia. National and international artists perform in a splendid natural setting. At this time, confirmed artists are el Trio Oriental, Atajo, Diverso, Los Kjarkas, Broncos and Los Horizontes, plus more unconfirmed guests.

**For ticket sales and more information:**

**(La Paz) Calle Juan de La Riva 1406 (corner of Calle Loayza), Edificio Alborada, first floor. Telephone: 2 902 445 – 2 205 420 – 2 204 942**

**20 July, 6 pm**

**UN PASEO POR HOLLYWOOD**

**Teatro Municipal 'Alberto Saavedra Perez', Calle Jenaro Sanjinés at the corner of Indaburo**

After the great success of shows like We Will Rock You, Tango Pasión and Un Paseo por Broadway I y II, All That Jazz Productions presents Un Paseo por Hollywood. The live show will feature over 40 first-class artists with an orchestra conducted by the Maestro Nicolás Suarez, including highly acclaimed soloists Mauricio Clavijo, Alvaro Gonzales, Luis Fernando Revollo, Claudia Barrón, Claudia Moscoso and Maira Gonzalez, and professional dancers directed by Erika Ayala and Ana Espinozo. The cast will showcase the most popular soundtracks from Hollywood, including Casablanca, Moon River, Rocky, Titanic, The Bodyguard, Flashdance, The Karate Kid, Armageddon, Love Story, ET and Ghostbusters, among others.



## FRIDAY 4TH MAY ATAJO @ TARGET URBANO, LA PAZ



La Paz's rightly famous indie-reggae-rock band **ATAJO** produced yet another accomplished and entertaining per-

formance in Bolivia's de facto capital at the ever-lively Sopocachi bar Target Urbano. The project that was to become ATAJO – which translates as 'Shortcut' in English – was founded in 1996 with the joining of a group of people who wanted to use music as a means to communicate and highlight the realities of certain social issues in Bolivia. The song '**Hoja Verde**', for example, from ATAJO's album **Vivitos y Coleando**, questions and criticises the work of the DEA in Bolivia and the agency's ignorance of the cultural importance of the coca leaf in Bolivian society. However, the band's various albums and songs address a range of different issues. In the words of ATAJO's founder and lead singer, Panchi Maldonado, the band set out with the intention of 'reaching hearts, touching souls and awakening minds'.

The band has been met with resistance from crowds and critics alike in the past, due to the subject matter of certain songs; however, ATAJO has correspondingly gained a cult following throughout Bolivia, particularly in La Paz, and further afield. Such support was demonstrated by the energy of those at the gig and the fervid enthusiasm between the band and crowd, who not only enjoyed ATAJO's music, but also supported the messages conveyed in the songs. Hearing tracks both old and new, and spurred by multiple cervezas and the sheer fun of the event, all attendees had a riotous time.

ATAJO has had a revolutionary influence in the development of rock music across the country since the release of its first album, **Personajes Paceños**, in 1998. That album was one of the first urban rock albums to be released in Bolivia, and since then the band has continually aimed to instill hope in the people of Bolivia through its music and its message. Having toured Europe twice, ATAJO has also drawn ties between Bolivia and the rest of the world. Not only does the band intend to inspire change for a better future in Bolivia, but its music and its live performances are unparalleled across the nation. Read more about ATAJO and hear the band's music at [www.atajo.org](http://www.atajo.org). But even better, if you get the chance to see them live, do it!

## THURSDAY 19TH APRIL SAINT JOAN AND THE STOCKYARDS @ EL MUSEO NACIONAL DE ETNOGRAFÍA Y FOLKLORE, LA PAZ



La Paz-based group Santa Juana de los **Mataderos** – or 'Saint Joan of the Stockyards'

in English – categorizes its music as a blend of electronic pop-punk with a touch of comedy and light-hearted theatricality. The group's strives to present its music with undertone of humour, creating a joyous ambiance during live performances led by the enthusiasm and cheerful stage presence of lead singer Wara Cajías. At the group's album launch at MUSEF – the National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore, which is more a theatre than a live music venue, with the crowd seated – there was an ever-present cheeriness and vivacity during the concert. Aided by a vast range of colourful and abstract computer-generated visuals projected upon a backdrop behind the stage, Santa Juana's performance was fun and funky. The group's music offers a variety of alternative pop material through the use of laptops and synthesizers to create programmed beats. These generated sounds work well with the guitar, played by Bernarda Villagomez, and the keyboards, by Sachiko Sakuma, accompanied by the clear-cut harmonies and powerful lead vocals of Cajías. The song 'La Aparecida' ('The Apparition') was the most memorable that night due to its catchy chorus and humorous lyrics, which tell the story of a girl who haunts her ex-boyfriend upon seeing him with another woman. Cajías's revelry in performing this song was compelling, and her history of working in theatre was evident through her confident stage performance. Her admiration for iconic American singer-songwriter Stevie Nicks was manifest by her stage presence and vocal traits, which have been heavily and magnificently inspired by the former Fleetwood Mac star. Influenced by such bands as Culture Club and Soft Cell from the 1980s and Stereolab and Disco Inferno from the 1990s, Santa Juana is a part of a new wave of synth/electro-pop bands that includes Ladhawke, Little Boots and La Roux.

Cajías and Villagomez, who have been producing music together for two years, now have a three-piece (with the addition of Sakuma) that will continue to please crowds and critics alike due to its honesty and entertainment value. The band de-

clares that its music is its passion, and Santa Juana hopes to continue to perform wherever it can, taking pleasure from live performances and the positive reactions it receives from the public. Santa Juana de los Mataderos is definitely worth a watch for a fun, inventive show. For more information on upcoming gigs and music downloads, see [www.myspace.com/santajuana-delosmataderos](http://www.myspace.com/santajuana-delosmataderos).

## MANTRA @ TTKOS'S WEEKLY TUESDAY REGGAE NIGHT, LA PAZ



Mantra, a stalwart La Paz reggae group, provides a genuinely groovy reggae show with every live performance, consistently

getting its bohemian audience out of the seats onto its feet with every appearance. The band – consisting of Brian Elio on lead vocals and bass, Charlie Jimenez on vocals and guitar and Marcelo Z on drums – formed three years ago when Jimenez and Elio decided to start a new reggae music project. Several drummers later, the band established itself as a three-piece reggae outfit, with its current lineup holding for around six months. Ttkos, a popular underground bar in La Paz with a friendly, funky vibe, hosts Mantra regularly, and despite the band's repetition of various songs, each of its performances electrifies the crowd. Mantra's influences range from various musical genres including rock, cumbia and trova – the latter two with roots in the coastal regions of Columbia and from Cuba, respectively. This blend of musical styles produces a melodic reggae sound that offers far more than the average Bob Marley cover band. Mantra also claims influences from bands such as Manu Chao, Gondwana and Fidel Nadal, revealing the variety of sounds within the wide-reaching realms of reggae music. The band currently only plays in La Paz, citing a lack of enthusiasm for reggae music in other cities as the main reason for its remaining in Bolivia's de facto capital. However, Mantra has plans for an album in 2013, which it hopes will expand its fan base. Ttkos offers a reggae night with live music every Tuesday – a must for both travellers and locals alike. Check out Mantra at such venues as Target and Equinox, as well as Ttkos. For more information on upcoming shows, see Mantra on Facebook at **MANTRA - REGGAE**.



Photo by Lorange Dao